

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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R 211150Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6110

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

USLO PEKING

AMCONGEN BOMBAY

AMCONGEN CALCUTTA

AMCONGEN MADRAS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, IN, US, USSR, PARM

SUBJECT: MRS.GANDHI'S INTERVIEW WITH "CANBERRA TIMES"

1. FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S MAY 12 INTERVIEW WITH THE "CANBERRA TIMES", LARGE PORTIONS OF WHICH WERE PUBLISHED IN THE DELHI PRESS MAY 21.

2. RELATIONS WITH THE USSR: ASKED HOW INDIA'S RECENT MOVES TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH CHINA AND PAKISTAN WOULD AFFECT INDO-SOVIET RELATIONS, MRS. GANDHI REPLIED: "WHY SHOULD IT HAVE ANY EFFECT ON OUR RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION?" SHE SAID INDIA WAS GRATEFUL TO THE USSR FOR ITS UNDERSTANDING OF INDIA'S PROBLEMS, "BUT INDO-SOVIET RELATIONS

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ARE NOT OPPORTUNISTIC." THEY ARE BASED ON A "CLEAR AND

REALISTIC APPRAISAL OF WHAT IS MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL."
ON HER FORTHCOMING VISIT TO THE USSR, MRS. GANDHI
SAID: "I HAVE NO AIMS. IT (THE VISIT) HAD BEEN PUT OFF
FOR A LONG TIME."

3. RELATIONS WITH THE U.S.: PRIMIN SAID THAT INDIA HAD
NO "QUARREL WITH THE UNITED STATES AS SUCH." FOR HER PART,
INDIA HAD NOT DONE OR SAID ANYTHING WHICH COULD BE CONSTRUED
AS AGAINST IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH THE US.

4. INDIAN OCEAN: ON BIG POWER RIVALRIES IN THE INDIAN
OCEAN, MRS. GANDHI REPORTEDLY SAID THAT INDIA BELIEVES THAT
POWER PRESENCES AND RIVALRIES DID NOT HELP ANYONE.
(COMMENT: WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO OBTAIN AN OFFICIAL TEXT TO
ASCERTAIN WHETHER THE PM USED THE TERM "PRSENCES." IF
SHE DID, IT REPRESENTS A MOVE EVEN-HANDED APPROACH TO THE
SUPER POWERS.)

5. RELATIONS WITH BANGLADESH: MRS. GANDHI SAW NO REASON
WHY THE FARAKKA PROBLEM COULD NOT BE SORTED OUT WITHOUT
INJURY TO EITHER COUNTRY. "...WE THINK THAT THROUGH TALKS,
AN AMICABLE SOLUTION CAN BE REACHED." SHE SAID BANGLADESH
WAS GOING THROUGH TROUBLED TIMES. "THERE HAVE BEEN ISOLATED
INCIDENTS. BUT I BELIEVE AND I AM TOLD THAT AN EFFORT IS BEING
MADE THERE TO DISCOURAGE THE ACTIVITIES OF THOSE THAT WANT
TO CREATE SUSPICION AGAINST INDIA." SHE SAID THAT BANGLADESH'S
PERENNIAL PROBLEM WAS FLOODING.
HOWEVER, IN THE SUMMER MONTHS ALL OVER THE SUBCONTINENT
THERE WAS A WATER SHORTAGE WHICH WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE
SILTING OF THE HOOGHLY. THE FARAKKA BARRAGE WAS BUILT,
SHE EXPLAINED, TO INCREASE THE FLOW INTO THE HOOGHLY TO
SAVE CALCUTTA CITY. ASKED HOW OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE REGION
COULD HELP TO PRODUCE A SETTLEMENT, MRS. GANDHI REPLIED
THAT BILATERALISM WAS THE BEST WAY OF DOING THINGS. WE
ARE CAPABLE OF SORTING OUT RELATIONS WITH OUR NEIGHBORS.

6. NUCLEAR AFFAIRS: THE PRIMIN SAID THAT INDIA SUPPORTED
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS-FREE ZONES IN DIFFERENT
REGIONS PROVIDED SUITABLE CONDITIONS EXISTED IN A
PARTICULAR REGION AND THE PROPOSAL IS WITH THE
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INITIATIVE AND AGREEMENT OF THE COUNTRIES IN THAT REGION.
"SOUTH ASIA CANNOT BE TREATED IN ISOLATION. IT IS A
SUB-REGION AND IS AN ITEGRAL PART OF THE REGION OF ASIA
AND THE PACIFIC AND THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT OF THE REGION
AS A WHOLE SHOULD BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT." SHE ADDED THAT
THE EXISTENCE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
AND THE PRESENCE OF FOREIGN MILITARY BASES "COMPLICATE
THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT OF OUR REGION AND MAKE THE SITUATION

INAPPROPRIATE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NUCLEAR WEAPON-FREE ZONE MERELY IN ONE SUB-REGION." "INDIA HAD BEHAVED AS A RESPONSIBLE COUNTRY AND WILL NOT DO ANYTHING WHICH CAN IN ANY WAY CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS."

7. COMMENT: PERHAPS EMBASSY CANBERRA MAY BE ABLE TO CLARIFY WHETHER MRS. GANDHI'S REMARKS ON THE ABOVE SUBJECTS ARE ACCURATELY REPORTED IN INDIAN PRESS.
SAXBE

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